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Sonia Taylor
Headteacher
The Grove School
Newcastle Road
Market Drayton
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Dear Mrs Taylor

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The Grove School

Following my visit to your school on 26 November 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in September 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- increase the frequency of unannounced lesson observations so that leaders can plan bespoke training to support improvements and gain a more accurate view of day-to-day teaching
- ensure that there is a numeracy strategy to address weaknesses in students' understanding and application of mathematics
- ensure that when teachers check students' understanding any weaker areas are followed up so that students' learning is secure
- ensure that a link governor is appointed to monitor the progress of students eligible for the pupil premium.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, your senior leaders, the chair and vice chair and four members of the governing body, staff and students to discuss the action taken since the last monitoring visit. I scrutinised a range of documents including achievement information, the impact of new performance management system, literacy plans, the school's monitoring information, and visited six lessons. I observed students' behaviour around the site at break time and lunchtime.

Context

The previous headteacher retired and the new headteacher took up post in September 2014. The senior leadership team has been re-organised and two additional assistant headteachers have joined the staff. A new head of mathematics has taken up post together with a new head of English.

Main findings

You are working with determination to tackle the weaknesses identified in the last inspection. You are improving the leadership of the school and the management of teaching. You have re-organised the senior leadership team and each member has clear roles and responsibilities. This allows you to hold them more accountable for their work. Line management structures across the school are tighter and reflect the raised expectations for all staff.

You have revised performance management systems and linked them to the teaching standards; this has increased expectations for students' progress. As a result, you are able to plan staff training based on a more accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching.

Your monitoring of teaching is improving. You no longer make a judgment of teaching based solely on lesson observations. Instead, a wide range of information is used, including some no notice visits to lessons. For the first time middle leaders are part of this process and have a clear role in holding teachers to account for their teaching. You have introduced a subject improvement record that is linked to students' progress information, classroom observations and students' views.

You have correctly identified weaknesses in students' progress in mathematics. The new head of mathematics has begun to address these. You do not have a mathematics strategy in place and staff are not clearly informed about what is non-negotiable in mathematics and numeracy teaching. Students' literacy skills are improving because the marking of spelling, punctuation and grammar is more consistent. However, teachers do not always act on the feedback information from students when students indicate that their learning is insecure. All students in Year 7 are tested for their reading ages and these are regularly monitored. More students

are starting Key Stage 4 with reading ages at least in line with their chronological ages. The librarian is working productively with the literacy coordinator to develop the library as a resource to better support students' literacy. All library books are colour coded and matched to reading ages for Key Stage 3. There are book boxes for the daily tutor time reading and students are encouraged to read more frequently. All staff are better able to help improve students' reading as a result of effective training and through the use of commercial reading schemes that support secondary-aged readers including the most able.

Teaching assistants are deployed more effectively and are providing better support to students who are eligible for the pupil premium in English and mathematics.

Governors are improving their challenge to you. They have more detailed information about the quality of teaching and students' progress. Governors are coming into school more frequently to gather first-hand information to augment the information you provide. There is not a link governor to monitor the progress of pupil premium students and this lessens the effectiveness of governors challenging the school's strategies.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The local authority continue to make timely visits to the school and provide a range of appropriate support at your request. An external consultant is working closely with the literacy coordinator to monitor the effectiveness of the actions being taken.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Shropshire.

Yours sincerely

Michelle Parker
Her Majesty's Inspector

cc. Chair of the Governing Body
cc. Local authority
cc. The Education Funding Agency